Other Norton books by Monica McGoldrick

Living Beyond Loss: Death in the Family, 2nd Edition
(Edited with Froma Walsh)

Women in Families: A Framework for Family Therapy
(Edited with Carol Anderson and Froma Walsh)

You Can Go Home Again: Reconnecting with Your Family

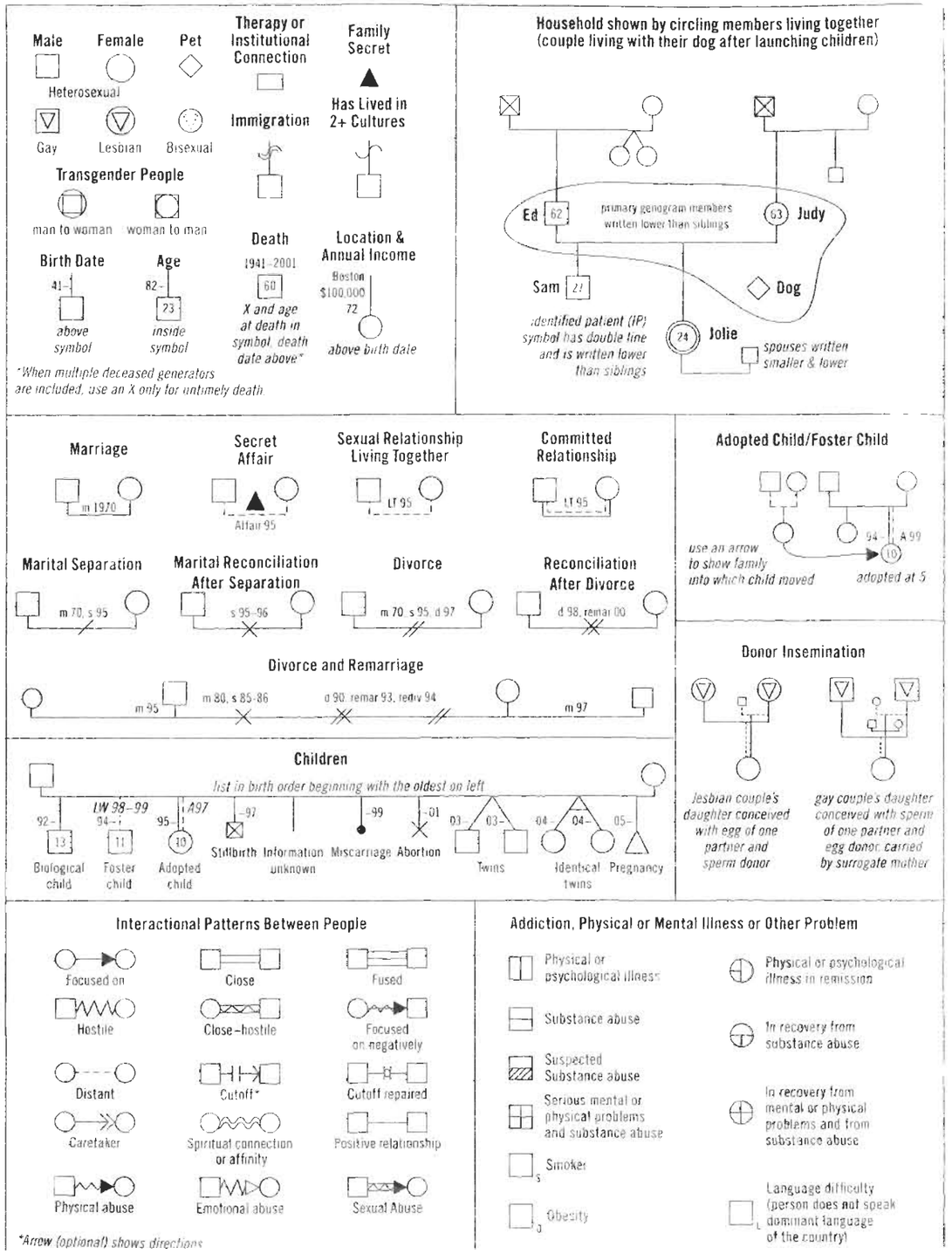
A Norton Professional Book

Genograms
Assessment and Intervention

Third Edition

Monica McGoldrick
Randy Gerson
Sueli Petry

W.W. Norton & Company
New York • London



Genograms
Third Edition

All illustrations were created by MonkeyGraphics (www.monkeygraphics.net)
unless noted otherwise.

Copyright © 2008 by Monica McGoldrick, Sylvia Shellenberger, and Sueli S. Petry
Copyright © 1999 by Monica McGoldrick and Sylvia Shellenberger
Copyright © 1985 by Monica McGoldrick and Randy Gerson

First edition published as GENOGRAMS IN FAMILY ASSESSMENT

All rights reserved
Printed in the United States of America
First Edition

For information about permission to reproduce selections from this book, write to
Permissions, W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10110

Composition and book design by Paradigm Graphics
Manufacturing by Malloy Printing
Production Manger: Leeann Graham

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McGoldrick, Monica.
Genograms : assessment and intervention / Monica McGoldrick, Randy Gerson, and Sueli
Petry. -- 3rd ed.
p. ; cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-0-393-70509-6 (pbk.)
1. Genograms. I. Gerson, Randy. II. Petry, Sueli S. III. Title.
[DNLM: 1. Family Therapy--methods. 2. Family Relations. 3. Famous
Persons. 4. Pedigree. WM 430.5.F2 M4782g 2007]

RC488.5.M395 2007
616.89'156--dc22 2007001298

ISBN 13: 978-0-393-70509-6 (pbk.)

W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 500 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10110
www.wwnorton.com
W. W. Norton & Company Ltd., Castle House, 75/76 Wells St., London W1T 3QT
1 3 5 7 5 9 8 6 4 2 0

To our families, from whom we have received our strengths and to whom we leave the legacy of all our endeavors.

2

Creating Genograms

GATHERING FAMILY INFORMATION AND CONSTRUCTING a genogram should always be part of a more general process of joining, assessing, and helping a family. Information is gathered and organized as family members tell their story. Although basic genogram information can be collected in a structured format as part of a medical record, the information should always be treated with respect and gathered for a purpose. Sharing a family's history is a sacred contract, not a matter of mere technical fact-gathering. The drawing, however, needs to conform to certain rules so that all clinicians have the same understanding of genogram language. This chapter explains the graphic dimensions of the genogram. Later chapters will explain the underlying patterns of this physical map as they pertain to specific family patterns, cultural patterns, and cultural issues, as well as the clinical and research implications of this map.

Genogram information can be obtained by interviewing one family member or several. Clearly, getting information from several family members increases reliability and provides the opportunity to compare perspectives and observe interactions directly. By interviewing several family members, we get multiple points of view, which together fill out the family's history—although, of course, we then have to deal with the added complexity of having multiple versions of family history.

Because family patterns can be transmitted from one generation to the next, the clinician should scan the genogram for patterns that have repeated over several generations. Such repetitive patterns occur in functioning, relationships, and family structure. Recognizing such patterns often helps families avoid repeating unfortunate patterns or transmitting them into the future. Tracking critical events and changes in family functioning allows us to make systemic connections between seeming coincidences (such as anniversary reactions), assess the impact of traumatic changes on family functioning, identify the family's resources and vulnerability to future stresses, and finally to put all of this into a larger social, economic, and political context. This tracking enables the clinician to promote resilience based on past sources of strength, helping family members modify past adaptive strategies that have become dysfunctional (Walsh, 2006).

Of course, seeing several family members is not always feasible, and often the genogram interview is used with just one person. The time required to complete a genogram assessment can vary greatly. Although the basic information can usually be collected in 15 minutes or less (Wright & Leahey, 1999), a comprehensive family assessment interview involving several family members may take an hour or two. It may at times even take much longer, as family members may not initially feel comfortable enough to reveal traumatic aspects of their history. Clinicians often prefer to spread the questioning out over time and develop the genogram as they progress in their work with families. What makes genograms such a rich tool is that information gets corrected and expanded as the clinician learns more about the family history. Thus, over time, the genogram itself becomes a more accurate and comprehensive map of the family's story.

Mapping the Family Structure

The backbone of a genogram is a graphic depiction of how different family members are biologically, legally, and emotionally related to one another from one generation to the next. This map is a construction of squares and circles representing people and lines delineating their relationships. In taking a genogram we usually go back to the grandparents of the index person (IP), including at least three generations on the genogram (or four or even five generations if the IP has children and grandchildren). The year that a genogram depicts is written in the upper left-hand corner. Usually the genogram depicts the current year, but a clinician might also use the genogram to freeze-frame a moment in the past, such as the time of symptom onset or critical change in a family. Depicting a genogram for a particular moment in the family history is

extremely useful, as it gives a picture of family members' ages, who was living in the home at the time, and the state of relationships in that period. When we choose one date in a person's life, other information, like deaths, ages, and important events, is calculated in relation to that date. If the person is dead, the age at death is shown instead (Chapter 8 shows a number of Freud genograms for different dates in their life cycle, indicating the ages of family members at each point).

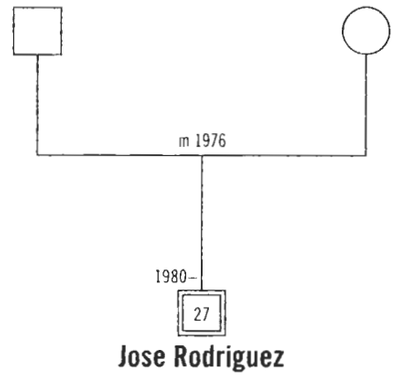
On the following pages we will build a sample genogram, using the typical format for genogram construction and expanding the genogram as the clinician learns more about family members. Refer to the key to symbols printed on the inside front cover of the book to decipher the genograms.

Each family member is represented by a box (male) or circle (female). For the index person or identified patient (IP) around whom the genogram is constructed, the lines are doubled. The figures representing family members are connected by lines that indicate their biological and legal relationships. Two people who are married are connected by lines that go down, across, and back up, with the husband on the left and the wife on the right. An "m" followed by a date indicates when the couple was married.

Figure 2.1 shows Jose Rodriguez and his parents. We can tell he is the IP by the double line around his symbol, which is square (showing he is male). His age (27) is shown inside his symbol, and his birthdate (1980) is written to the left, above his symbol. His symbol hangs down from a line that joins his parents. (Children of a couple are hung down from the couple line in order of their birth, left to right.) Once the basic family structure or skeleton of the genogram is drawn, we can start adding information about the family, particularly regarding demographics, functioning, relationships, and critical family events.

Figure 2.2 shows more information about Jose and his parents. It also includes his siblings, whose symbols are made smaller and higher than his own. Typically the IP is shown lower and a bit larger than his or her siblings, as you can see with Jose. Spouses of siblings are shown lower and smaller than the siblings themselves, so that the birth order remains clear, as will be seen in the next genogram. This allows you to clearly see the

Figure 2.1 Jose Rodriguez and Parents (2007)



structure of the family, including birth order, gender, and distance in age between siblings, and to develop hypotheses related to it. Often we have no way of knowing for sure whether our hypotheses about a particular family are accurate, but hypothesizing about patterns on a genogram is a basic way to understand the family's history. We see that Jose is the 2nd of four siblings. (The small black circle on the far left indicates that Carmella had a miscarriage in 1978.) He has an older brother Peter, who has a high-school education and works in construction, and his younger twin siblings, David and Maria, are a law student and a nurse, respectively. Converging lines connect the twins to the parental line. If the twins are identical, a bar between their birth lines connects them to each other, as will be seen in the next genogram for Jose's nieces. Given the distance in age, we might assume that Jose and Peter, who is only a year older than he, would grow up as a pair and that perhaps the twins, being 4 years younger, would be another pair, though it could be that the three brothers would be a group and the sister the outsider. However, other factors may modify such alliance patterns; in this case, for instance, the two oldest brothers are different on major dimensions (sports and education).

We also see that Jose is a computer programmer with a BA, and that Jose's mother, Carmella, is 59 and works as an office manager whereas the

father, Jorge, who is 58, is a cab driver. We may wonder what family dynamics led the younger siblings to receive more education and what impact educational and occupational differences may have on family relationships.

Figure 2.2 Rodriguez Nuclear Family (2007)

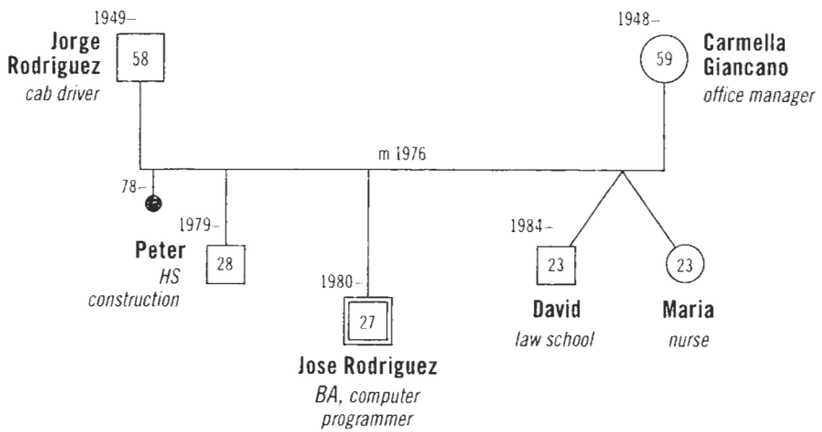
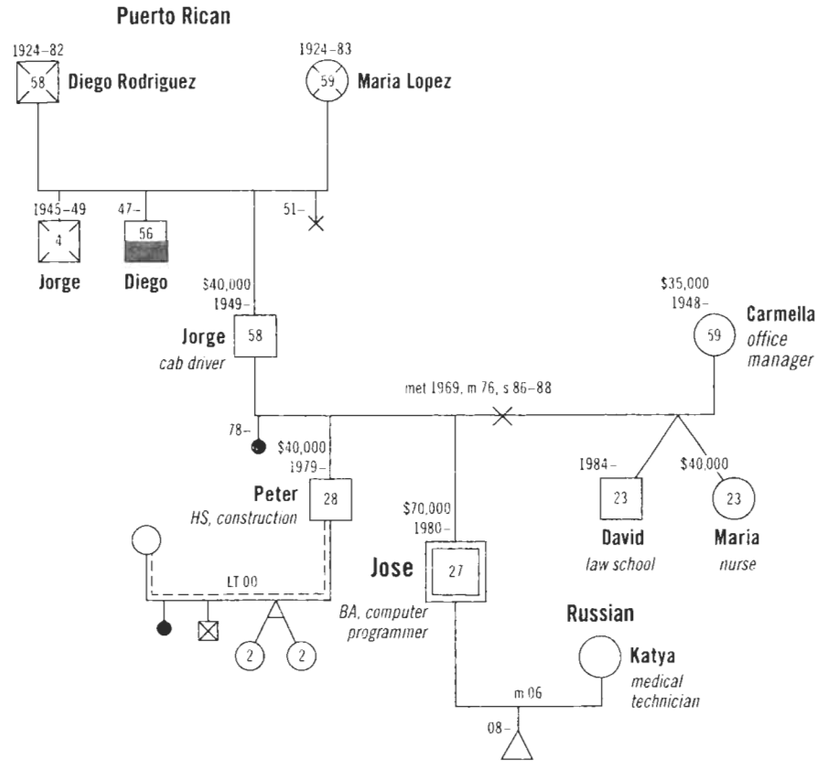


Figure 2.3 expands the genogram upwards to show the father's family of origin and downwards to show the next generation. For a person who is dead, an X is placed inside the symbol, as indicated for the paternal grandparents. Birth and death dates are separated by a dash above the symbol. The person's current age or age at death is usually indicated within the symbol, as we can see for the grandparents. In genograms that go back more than three generations, symbols for individuals in the distant past are not usually crossed out, as they are all presumably dead. Only untimely or traumatic deaths are usually indicated with an X on such genograms. Here, we see that the father, Jorge, is placed lower than his siblings to make clear his place in the sibling line. We learn also through this expansion that Jose is married to a Russian woman, Katya, and that they are expecting their first child (indicated by a triangle). We also see that his older brother,

Figure 2.3 Jose Rodriguez With Father's Family (2007)



Peter, has 2-year-old identical twin daughters and that he and his partner, who have lived together since 2000, indicated by "LT 00," experienced both a miscarriage and then the stillbirth of a son prior to the twins' birth. Looking upwards we begin to learn about Jose's father. Jorge was the youngest child in his Puerto Rican family and was named for an oldest brother who died at age 4, the same year Jorge was born. Exploring family patterns of naming and birth order can reveal a great deal about relationships, as we will see. The second son, Diego, named for the grandfather, has an active alcohol problem, which is probably an ongoing stress on the whole family. We see also that the grandmother had an abortion of the final

pregnancy in 1951 (indicated by an X). It seems she was so overwhelmed by the loss of her oldest son that she felt she could not bear to risk having another child whose loss would break her heart.

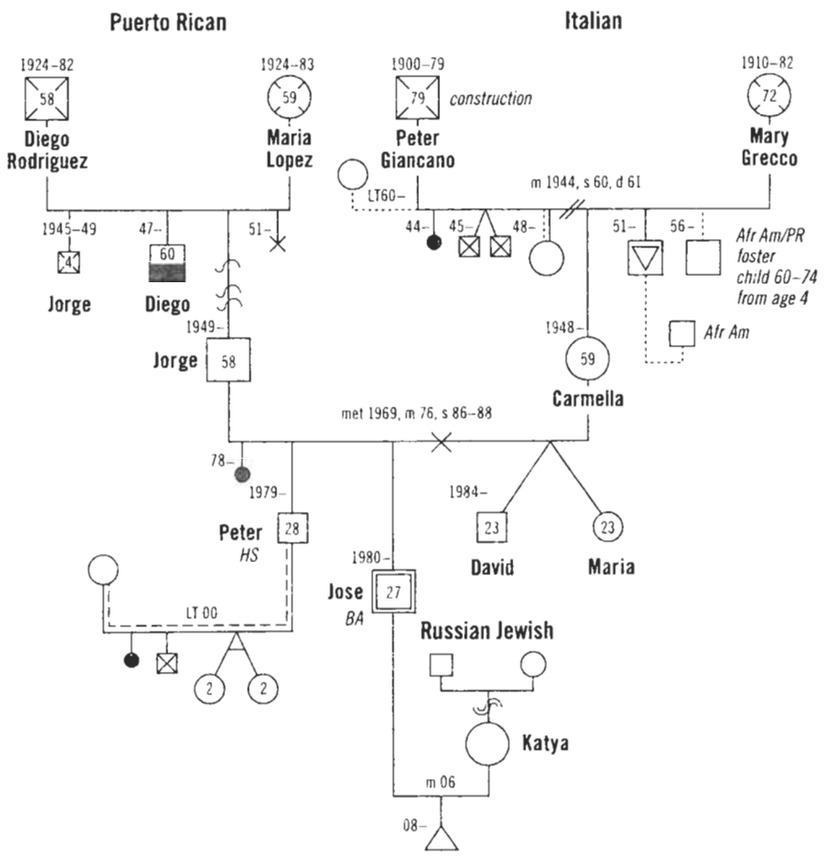
The genogram also includes the annual income of the immediate family members, indicating that Jose is currently by far the most financially successful. Making much more money than his older brother may create some distance between them. Finally, we learn that Jorge and Carmella met in 1969 and were separated from 1986 to 1988. Marriage, separation, divorce, and living together dates, along with dates when a couple met, are included above the couple line. Backslashes signify a disruption in the marriage—one slash for separation, two for divorce—and a slash in the other direction (creating an X) signifies reconciliation after a separation or divorce.

Figure 2.4 adds the mother's family of origin. We see that Carmella came from an Italian family that had a miscarriage and then twins who died at birth. Following these losses, they adopted a daughter (indicated by a dashed line next to the solid line), the same year the mother became pregnant and had Carmella. Another biological son was born when Carmella was 3, and in 1960 the couple took in a foster son (indicated by a dotted line). Shortly thereafter, Carmella's parents separated, when she was 12. The father had a live-in girlfriend from that time until his death in 1979.

The genogram also shows that Carmella's younger brother was gay and in a sexual relationship with an African-American man, and that Katya's parents were Russian Jewish immigrants.

Jose's presenting problem was free-floating anxiety to the point of almost incapacitating panic. His genogram may help us to develop some hypotheses about his anxiety. It is perhaps not surprising that he should become anxious shortly before the birth of his first child. From the genogram we can see that there was a loss of the first child for three generations: His father's oldest brother died at 4, and his mother's parents lost their first three children. His parents had a miscarriage before the birth of his older brother, and that brother experienced a miscarriage and a stillbirth before the birth of their twins. But there may be other factors operating as well. Jose's father, who was named for his dead brother, is now 58, the same age *his* father, Diego, was when he died. Coincidentally,

Figure 2.4 Jose Rodriguez With Mother's Family



Jose's mother, Carmella, is 59, the same age as the paternal grandmother when she died. This could possibly create added anxiety for Jorge, who may be passing down the anxiety to his son, to whom he is very close.

Symbols Used to Denote Family Experiences and Relationships

Various symbols are used to show common family experiences and relationships. The Rodriguez family illustrates the use of many of these symbols (Color Figure 1). For example, you can see that Jose's father was an immigrant and had experience living in more than one culture. The single-wave line above his symbol reflects the 2 years he was in Vietnam

in the military from 1967 to 1969. The double-wave line below this single wave indicates that after he returned from Vietnam, he immigrated to the mainland U.S. and has remained here ever since. The "SL" to the lower right of his symbol indicates that he is both a smoker and had difficulty with the English language as an immigrant. (His daughter-in-law, Katya, had the same difficulty.) The O beside the symbol of his older brother indicates that the brother is obese. We can also see that this brother is cut off from his father for many years, from 1966–1981, indicated by the line with a double slash between them. However, they repaired the cutoff (shown by the circle between the cutoff lines) the year before the father died.

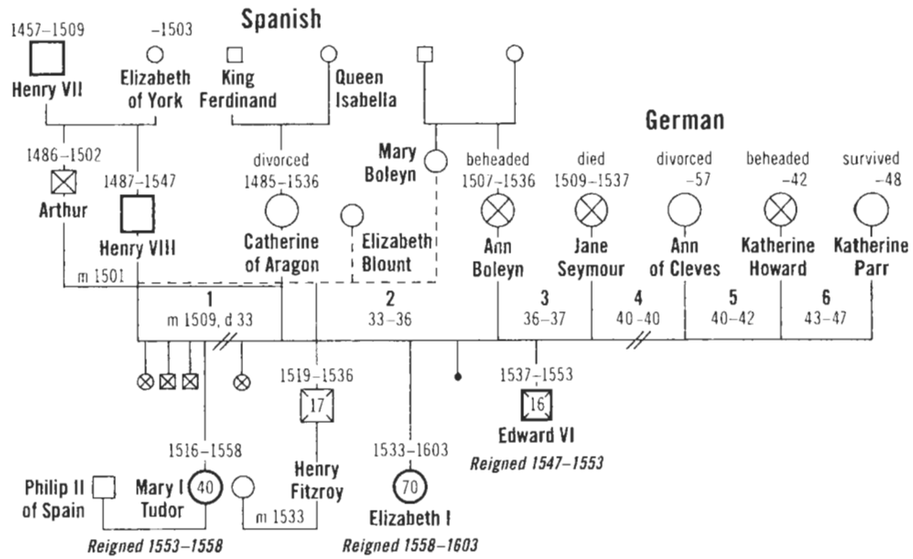
This genogram also reveals a set of family relationships in which Jose may be pitted against his older brother, to whom the mother always felt very attached because he was born 3 months after her beloved father died. Carmella had a conflictual relationship with her older sister since childhood, just as her sons, Peter and Jose, do. Peter is athletic and good-looking, whereas Jose is short and uncoordinated, characteristics that we have also noted on the genogram. Other symbols reflect the nature of the relationships between other family members; refer to the key on the inside front cover to decipher them.

Mapping Couple Relationships with Multiple Partners

Couple relationships with multiple partners add a degree of complexity that is challenging to depict on a genogram. Figure 2.5, which diagrams the wives of King Henry VIII, shows one way of handling this.

The rule of thumb is that, when feasible, the different marriages follow in order from left to right if all members are deceased, but for current family members, the most recent partner would usually be shown closest to a spouse. In the case of Henry VIII, because all are deceased, the wives are shown in order from left to right: Catherine of Aragon, Ann Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Ann of Cleves, Katherine Howard, and finally Katherine Parr. The marriage and divorce dates should help to make the order clear. However, when each spouse has had multiple partners (and

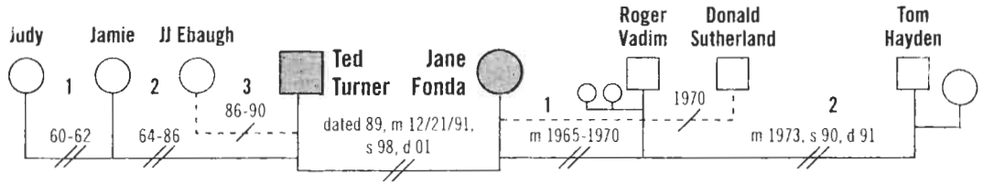
Figure 2.5 Henry VIII and His Wives



possibly children from previous marriages), mapping the complex web of relationships can be difficult indeed. In this case the genogram indicates two of Henry VIII's many affairs (shown by dotted lines): one with Elizabeth Blount, because it produced a son, and another with Mary Boleyn, because she was the sister of his second wife, Ann Boleyn. A further complication is that Henry's first wife, Catherine of Aragon, had previously been married to Henry's older brother, Arthur.

One solution to these types of problems is to place the relationship you are focusing on in the center and the partner's other spouses off to the side, as in Figure 2.6. Such situations can get very complicated when each spouse has had other spouses. If previous spouses have had other partners, it may be necessary to draw a second line, slightly above the first marriage line, to indicate these relationships, as is indicated for Roger Vadim and Tom Hayden.

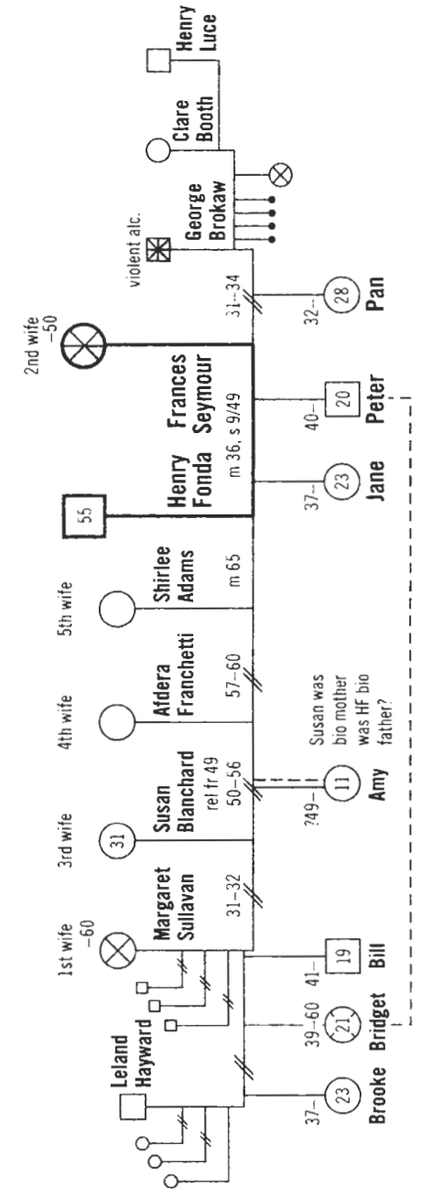
Figure 2.6 Husband (Ted Turner), Wife (Jane Fonda), and Several Partners of Each



The next genogram, of Jane Fonda's father (Figure 2.7), is even more complicated. Each spouse had been married several times. Henry's first wife, Margaret Sullavan, had been married once before she married him, and she remarried afterwards. Fonda's second wife, Frances Seymour, had earlier been married to George Brokaw, who himself had previously been married to Clare Booth, who in turn later married Henry Luce. What cannot be seen on this genogram is that Henry Fonda and his wife Frances Seymour lived very near to his previous wife Margaret Sullavan and her next husband, Leland Hayward (who was Fonda's agent) when they were in California. The two families then moved next door to each other in Connecticut, so the marriage chronology does not tell the whole story.

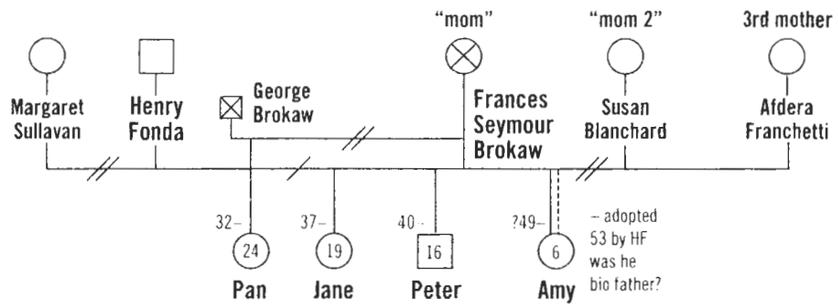
Whenever possible it is preferable to show children from different marriages in their correct birth order (oldest on the left, youngest on the right). If there are many children in a family, an alternate method to show them is the one depicted in Figure 2.7. This method can be used to save space. The drawback of this method is that it becomes difficult to see the birth order. For example, Amy, perhaps Jane and Peter Fonda's half-sister, is shown to the left of Peter, even though she was many years younger than he. Jane and Peter's other half-sister, Pan, who was 5 years older than Jane and lived with them from age 5 until she went to college, is also not shown in birth order, as she was, in fact, the oldest of all. An alternative genogram showing all the Fonda siblings in birth order (Figure 2.8) could be relevant for understanding the siblings in relation to each other. Notice that in this case Brokaw's next wife, Clare Booth Luce, has been omitted to keep the graphic clear. With complex families, choices always have to be made between clarity and level of detail. Of course, with computers

Figure 2.7 Henry Fonda Marriages (1960)



that can hold data on many relationships, choices can be made about whom to include on a particular genogram graphic.

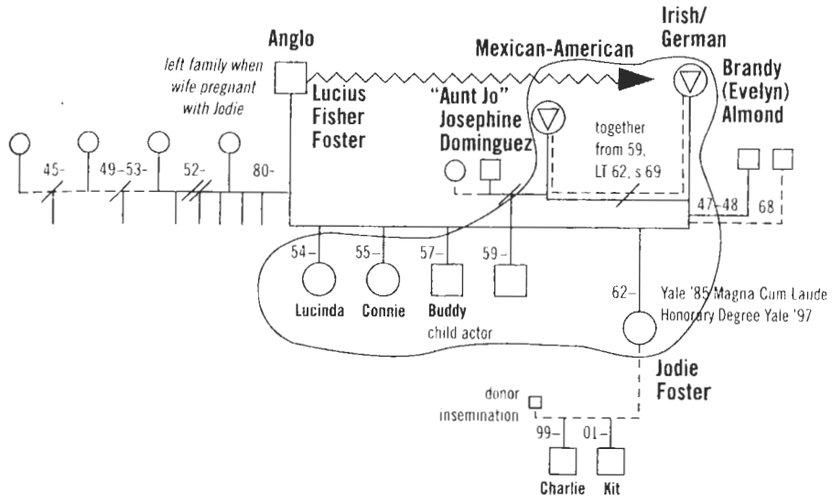
Figure 2.8 Fonda Children in Birth Order (1956)



If a couple are involved in a love affair or living together but not legally married, their relationship is depicted with a line similar to that for married couples, except that the line is dotted rather than solid (as shown for Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland in Figure 2.6). If they are in a committed relationship there can be a dotted and a solid line to show the permanency but that the relationship is not legal, as shown in Figure 2.9 for Jodie Foster's mother, Brandy, and her partner, Josephine. When spouses have had partners of both sexes, it may be necessary to draw the relationship lines at different levels to clarify who was connected with whom. When there have been a great many partners, it may also be necessary to be selective, showing only the most significant relationships.

Figure 2.9 shows the family of Jodie Foster. Her father, Lucius, fathered children by five partners: three wives and two other partners. (We have drawn lines down indicating the number and placement of children, but not their gender, as it was not our focus.) Recording the specific chronology of couple relationships can be significant in tracking family patterns, a process that will become much easier with computer software,

Figure 2.9 Jodie Foster



where the entire couple chronology could be charted but only certain information shown. Jodie, for example, was conceived and born 3 years after her parents separated—indeed, shortly before the divorce came through.

Jodie's mother was in a committed couple relationship with Jo Dominguez from 1959. The couple began living together in 1962 (LT 62). Jo's prominence in the family is indicated by depicting the couple line for Brandy and Jo just above that of the biological father. "Aunt Jo" became a haven of stability for the children, providing financial, physical, and emotional support to them for many years. Brandy and Jo separated in 1969. Jo's husband is shown smaller and higher, along with the woman he spent the rest of his life with. He never divorced Jo and was thus not free to marry again; his other relationship is indicated with a dotted line.

Single-parent adoption can be diagrammed as seen in Color Figure 2. This genogram shows the family of Mia Farrow, who had biological children (including twin sons, Matthew and Sasha, and a third son, Fletcher) and interracially adopted three children (Soon-Yi, Lark, and Daisy) with her second husband, Andre Previn. She adopted three more children during her relationship with Woody Allen (Moses, Dylan/Eliza/Malone,

and Tam), the first two of whom he adopted as well, and they had a biological child together (Satchel, now called Seamus). Finally, she adopted four more children on her own: Thaddeus, Frankie-Minh, Isaiah, and Kaeli. If at all possible, the cultural background should be indicated, as it is an important part of anyone's history. Because this genogram is so complex, we have also offered color coding (blue for names, red for disabilities, green for location and cultural heritage, and other colors for other information.

When living situations are complicated, it is helpful to draw lines circling the different households. This is especially important in multinuclear families, where children spend time in various households, as in Figure 2.10 for Jackie Bouvier Kennedy and her sister Lee after their parents' separation when Jackie was 7. During the school year the sisters lived in New York City with their mother, maternal grandparents, and maternal great-grandmother. (The great-grandmother, however, was thought "uncouth" and kept upstairs most of the time. Furthermore, the grandparents, although never separated, did not speak to each other, despite the fact that they sat together at meals!) During the summers, Jackie and Lee spent time with their father's large extended family on Long Island, though their father appeared only occasionally.

When the "functional" family is different from the biological or legal family, as when children are raised by a grandparent or in an informal adoptive family, it is useful to create a separate genogram to show the functional structure (see Watts Jones, 1998). When children have lived as part of several families—biological, foster, and adoptive—separate genograms may help to depict the child's multiple families over time.

Color Figure 3 shows the changes in Louis Armstrong's family from the year he was born, 1901, through 1918. Louis Armstrong, perhaps the greatest jazz musician of all time, was an amazingly inventive, quick, and technically and creatively extraordinary musician who grew up in poverty and in shifting living situations from his early childhood in New Orleans. Luckily he found support for his phenomenal talents from a relatively early age and through his powerful intelligence was able to use his inventiveness to develop his talents. Soon after he was born he went to live with his father's mother, Josephine Armstrong, as his parents separated and his

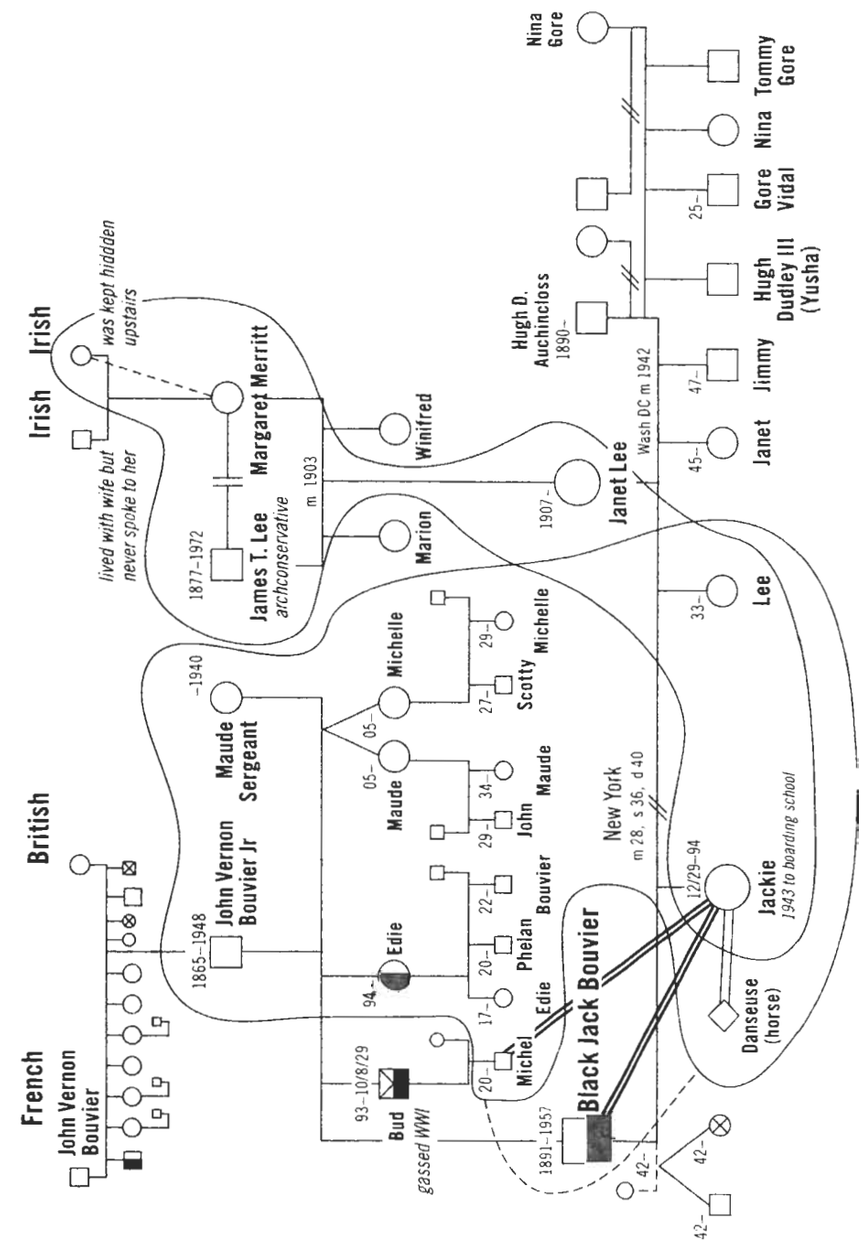
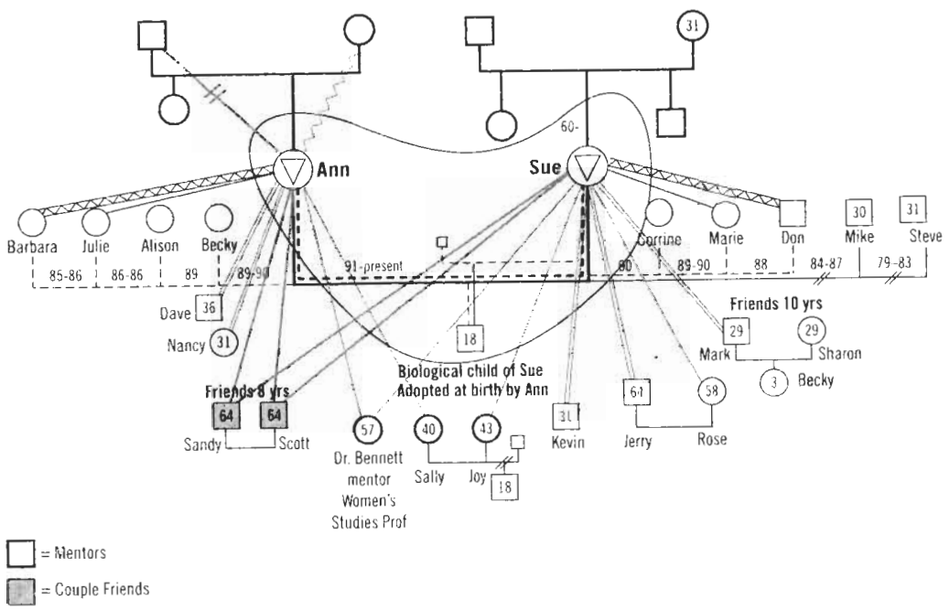


Figure 2.10 Family of Jackie Bouvier Kennedy

father went to live with another woman. The next year, however, his parents got back together, and in 1903, Louis's sister, Beatrice, was born. But Louis remained with his grandmother until 1905, when his parents separated, and he and his sister, who was called Mama Lucy, moved in with their mother. They lived with her and a number of boyfriends over the next several years. In 1912, when he was 11, Louis shot off a gun on a holiday, was arrested, and was sent to the New Orleans Home for Colored Waifs. He remained there for a couple of years until about 1914, when he went to live with his father and half siblings. But he soon returned to live with his mother, and he stayed with her until 1918, when, at the age of 17, he moved to Chicago to work with King Oliver's band.

Figure 2.11, which illustrates a lesbian couple with a child born to one of them, Sue, and adopted by the other, Ann, demonstrates how to diagram children conceived by donor insemination. The very small square indicated as the child's biological father is a sperm donor. The parents' previous relationships are also shown on the genogram. Sue had been

Figure 2.11 Donor Insemination and Lesbian Network



married and divorced several times and Ann had had several live-in partners. Burke and Faber (1997) have suggested using a "genogrid," an adaptation of the genogram, to help to depict the liaisons, long-term bonds, and social networks of lesbian couples. The genogrid distinguishes historical influences, primary emotional and social relationships, and intimate relationships. This genogram reflects the relationships suggested by Burke and Faber.

Missing Information

Information is always missing from genograms, but what information is missing in itself may give clues to family secrets, cutoffs, and so on. When only partial information can be unearthed, that is included. For instance, in the Freud family, which we will discuss in Chapter 8, Sigmund's father was married three times. We know that he had four children with his first wife, two of whom died early, but nothing is known about them or his second wife, Rebecca. One suspects something must have gone very wrong for no one ever to mention the other children again or the wife, especially because Sigmund's older half brothers, as well as the father, would have known her.

Tracking Family Patterns on the Genogram

At times it is useful to create different genograms to show different kinds of information, perhaps one for basic demographics, one for relationship patterns, one for patterns of family creativity and dysfunction, one for the family's community connections, and others to provide snapshots of key points in the family's history, such as the point of symptom onset.

Demographic Information: Getting the "Facts"

In fleshing out the history of the immediate and extended families, our initial concern is with getting the "facts" on each family member. These are the vital statistics of the family, the type of objective data that can usually be verified by public records. Demographic information includes ethnic

background, ages, dates of birth and death, whereabouts, income, occupation, and educational level. There is a specific place to put some of this information: Current age or age at death goes inside the person's symbol, the birth date goes above the person's symbol and to the left, the death date goes above the symbol to the right, and the person's current location and income go above the birth and death dates. Other demographic information goes near the person's symbol wherever there is room.

Color Figure 4 shows demographic information for the Fonda family. The following information would be relevant for each family member, though we do not have all such information for the Fonda family.

- dates of birth, marriage, separation, divorce, illness, and death (including cause)
- sibling position
- ethnic, class, and religious background
- any changes in class through education, income, or marriage
- current religious practices and changes in religion
- occupation and education
- current whereabouts
- state of current relationships (closeness, conflict, cutoff)

As the clinician collects more information about family events, certain gaps will appear in the history. The clinician can use the genogram to map the family's evolution through time and to broaden the historical perspective on the family. At times family members themselves become so interested in their story that they begin historical research to expand their perspective. Family members may learn more information by speaking to relatives, consulting family bibles, reading local or regional histories, or obtaining medical, genealogical, and other public records.

Patterns of Functioning

Information about functioning includes more or less objective data on the medical, emotional, and behavioral functioning of family members. Objective signs, such as absenteeism from work and drinking patterns, may be more useful indications of a person's functioning, although more

commonly family members may start by indicating that the family member is "weird." Indicators of highly successful functioning should also be included. The information collected on each person is placed next to his or her symbol on the genogram. Using a software program with a database will allow the clinician to add details on the functioning of each individual in the family without crowding up the genogram, because they can be hidden or shown as the clinician chooses. The therapist might also indicate a global level of functioning on the genogram by each person's symbol and track changes in the functioning over time on a family chronology.

Addictions are shown by filling in the bottom half of the square or circle. Those in recovery from addiction have only the lower left half filled in. If they have attended therapy, Alcoholics Anonymous, or another recovery program, or if they have any strong institutional affiliation, such as with a church, fraternal organization, or other group, this can be indicated by a line out to a rectangle indicating the therapist or institutional connection.

Color Figure 5 shows information on the functioning of the Fonda family. On this genogram, rectangles linked to Ted Turner and Peter Fonda indicate their relationships with their therapists. The dates of treatment can also be shown. Suspected alcohol or drug abuse can be indicated by slanted lines on the bottom half of the symbol, as indicated for Peter Fonda. In Peter's case, he has acknowledged using drugs over many years, but sees himself as lucky that it never became an addiction (Fonda, 1998). Using genogram software, one could also track type of abuse (daily marijuana use, weekend binge drinking, etc.), in order to track the evolution of the substance abuse problem over time.

Serious mental or physical illness can be indicated by filling in the left half of the symbol. In general, the nature of the illness should also be indicated near the symbol. Genogram software will soon allow one to track illnesses, both physical and psychological, in considerable detail, and then choose to show particular illnesses for diagnostic purposes, or, on the other hand, to hide details in order to track other family patterns more easily. When a person has both an addiction and a mental illness, three-quarters of the symbol is filled in, as indicated for Jane and Peter's maternal grandfather, Eugene Ford Seymour. When he or she is mentally

ill but in recovery from addiction, the left half is filled in and the lower right is empty with a horizontal line across the middle of the symbol.

The functioning of family members may repeat itself across several generations. In such cases, a particular style of functioning (whether adaptive or maladaptive) or of dealing with problems is passed down from one generation to the next. This transmission does not necessarily occur in linear fashion. An alcoholic father may have children who become teetotalers, and their children may again become drinkers.

Often the presenting problem of the family will have occurred in previous generations. Numerous symptomatic patterns, such as alcoholism, incest, physical symptoms, violence, and suicide, tend to be repeated in families from generation to generation. By noting the pattern repetition, the clinician may be helped to understand the family's present adaptation to the situation and to short circuit the process. For example, let's look again at Color Figure 5 for the Fonda family. Jane remembered that her mother had had plastic surgery to improve her figure and recognized that her mother undoubtedly had struggled with the same body image problems she struggled with herself (Fonda, 2006). Margaret Sullavan's daughter Bridget Hayward committed suicide less than a year after her mother had committed suicide herself. Given the evidence that one suicide seems to make suicide an option for others in the family, specific efforts at suicide prevention may well be indicated in such families.

The same can be said for preventive intervention in families with a history of such symptoms as sexual abuse and alcohol abuse. For example, Ted Turner (Color Figure 6) reached a crisis in 1991 at age 53, the same age at which his father had shot himself in the head with the gun with which he had taught Ted to shoot years before. Ted, like his father, had led a driven life of work and hard drinking. But Ted managed not to repeat his father's pattern. Instead, that age became for him a time of critical transformation of his life. It was the year he married Jane Fonda. Both of them gave up drinking, and Ted committed himself to expanding his life rather than letting his obsession with work drive him over the edge, as it had for his father.

Clinicians can track multigenerational patterns of resilience, strength, and success as well as failure (Walsh, 1995, 2006). All the families in this book should be assessed for their resilience as well as their problems.

Among the most amazing are the Hepburns (see Color Figure 17), who illustrate the repeated trauma of suicide and depression along with the resilience and power of strong women on their own; the Fonda/Turner families, which show an amazing ability to survive and transform themselves beyond the trauma of loss, suicide, silence, and mental illness, turning hardship into productivity and self-regeneration; the Bell family (see Figure 6.2), in which deafness is complemented by inventiveness and resourcefulness with sound; and Frida Kahlo (see Color Figure 9), who illustrates an amazing ability to transform cultural difference, disruption, loss, trauma, and physical disability into transcendent strength and creative energy. Another remarkably creative, resilient family is the Blackwell family (Figure 2.12), who show a dramatic pattern of strong and successful women. The parents were Dissenting Congregationalists who believed in equal education for women. This amazing family included the first woman physician and the first woman minister in the U.S., as well as numerous other successful woman physicians, ministers, artists, and suffragettes. Yet, as so often happens, patterns of success and failure coexist in the family. In each succeeding generation, along with all these outstandingly successful women, one daughter appears to have been an invalid. Of Samuel and Hannah's five daughters, Anna was a writer, Elizabeth the first woman physician in the U.S., Ellen, an accomplished artist, and Emily, another of the early women physicians. The second daughter, Marion, was always sickly. Their brother Samuel married Antoinette Brown, the first woman minister in the U.S., and together they also had five daughters: Edith and Ethyl became physicians, Florence became a successful minister, and Agnes became an artist. The third daughter, Grace, became an invalid. The three sons of Samuel and Hannah Blackwell who married were quite extraordinary in their own right, especially for marrying three remarkable women, Antoinette Brown, Lucy Stone (one of the most important early suffrage leaders), and Emma Lawrence (Lucy's cousin and another early suffrage leader). The next generation had 16 children altogether (not counting 3 infant deaths), 7 of them adopted, several by the unmarried daughters. The only adopted son, Paul, was given up because of family disapproval. In a family like this, one can't help but ask about the underlying gender constraints and empowerment mechanisms. It is interesting that none of the Blackwell daughters ever married.

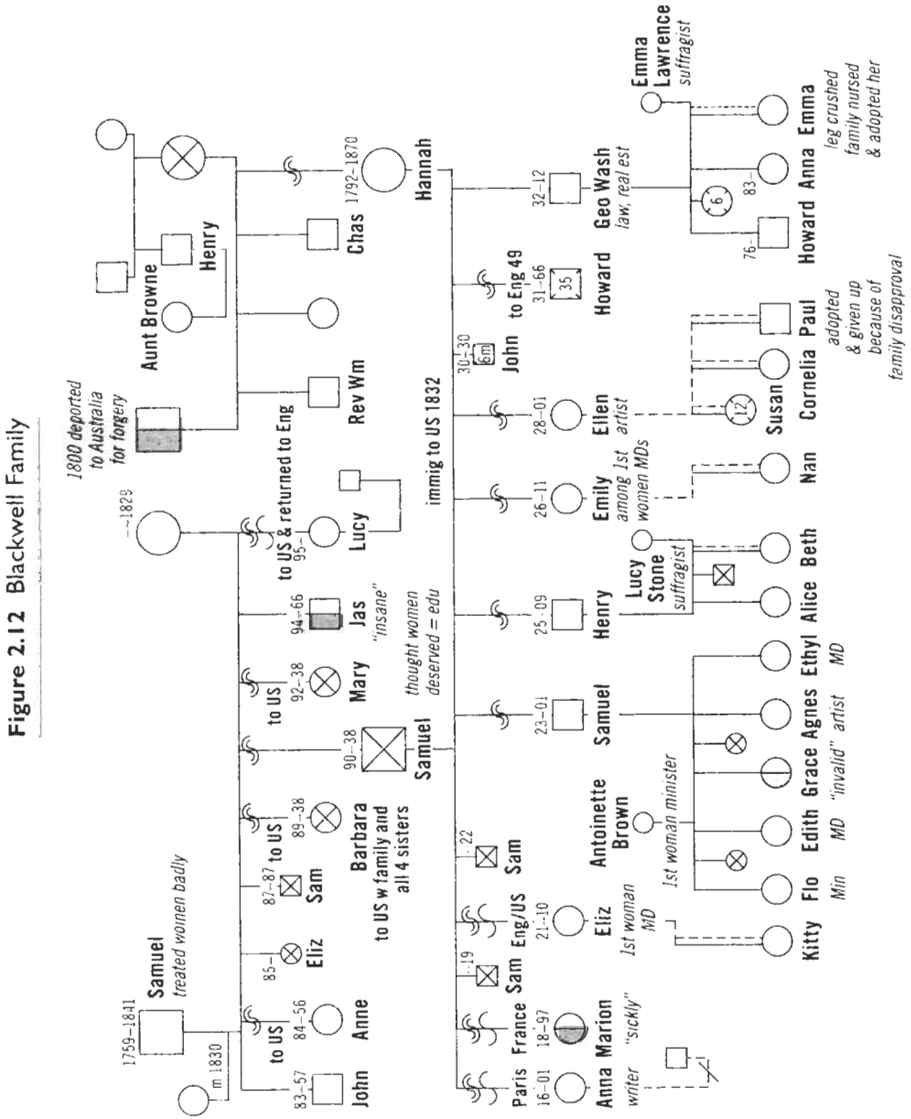
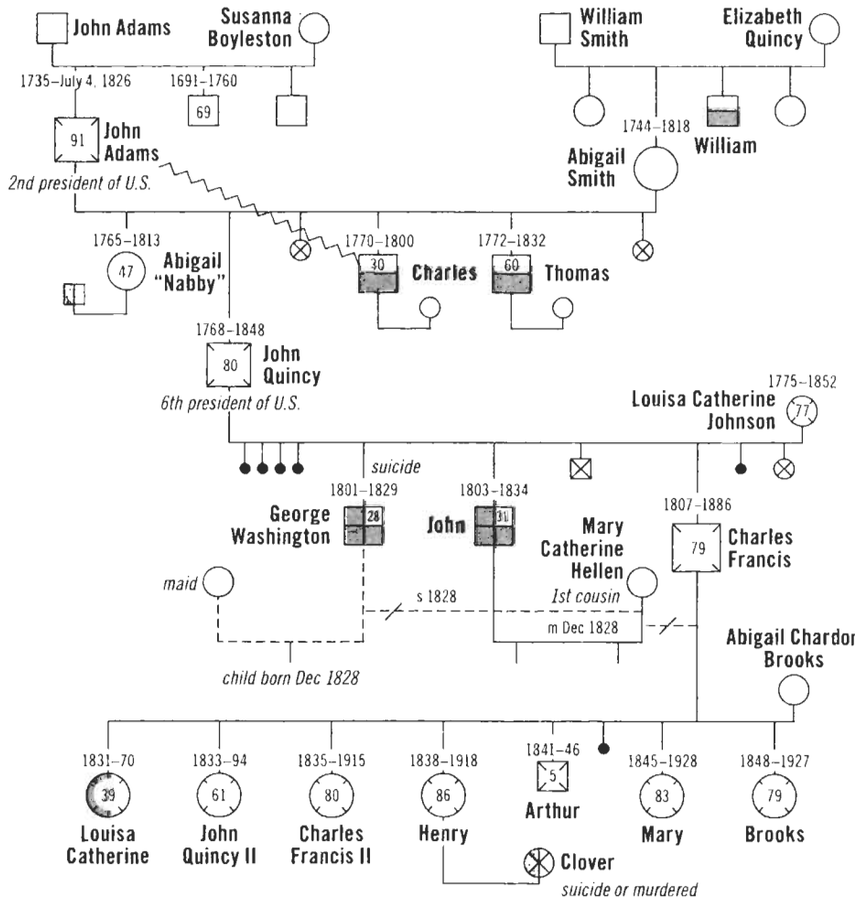

1800 deported to Australia for forgery
Aunt Browne
Henry
Chas 1792–1870
Hannah
Geo Wash law, real est
Emma Lawrence suffragist
Howard Anna Emma leg crushed family nursed & adopted her
Howard
John to Eng 49
Ellen artist
Cornelia Paul adopted & given up because of family disapproval
Susan
Rev Wm
to US & returned to Eng
Lucy
immig to US 1832
Emily among 1st women MDs
Nan
Lucy Stone suffragist
Beth
Henry
Alice
Samuel
Ethyl MD
Grace Agnes "invalid" artist
Edith
Flo Min MD
Kitty
Antoinette Brown 1st woman minister
Eliz 1st woman MD
Sam Eng/US
Sam
France
Marion "sickly" writer
Anna
Paris
Barbara to US w family and all 4 sisters
Mary "insane"
thought women deserved = edu
Jas
to US
Eliz
Sam
Anne
John
Samuel treated women badly
Samuel
1759–1841
m 1830
1829–
to US
to US
to US

Figure 2.13 Adams Family



youth. It is not surprising then, that Jung became a physician with a profound interest in religion and in the supernatural. It fit with the predominant patterns in his family. One might be more surprised if he had ignored medicine, religion, and the supernatural in his own work. He also had fears of inheriting the mental illness of his mother and paternal great-grandmother, Sophie, and he did indeed suffer a breakdown in 1913.

Family Relationships and Roles

Delineating the relationships between family members is the most inferential aspect of genogram construction. Such characterizations are based on the reports of family members and direct observation. Different lines are used to symbolize various types of relationship between two family members. Although such commonly used relationship descriptors as "fused" or "conflictual" are difficult to define operationally and have different connotations for clinicians with various perspectives, these symbols are useful in clinical practice. Relationships in a family do, of course, change over time, so this aspect of genograms is one of the most subjective and most subject to change. Furthermore, one might argue that any conflictual relationship implies underlying connection, so that any highly conflictual relationship by definition reflects fusion as well as conflict. Cutoffs can also involve great conflict or silent distancing. Dominance or relationships in which one person focuses an enormous amount of energy on another can be illustrated by a heavy straight line with an arrow in the direction of the one who is focused upon. Other important relationships, such as hostile/dependent and ambivalent ones, are harder to depict on a genogram. Relationships involving physical abuse are depicted by a zigzag line ending in a solid arrow, indicating who was abused by whom. To indicate sexual abuse we use the same zigzag line and solid arrow, but with straight lines on the outside of the zigzag line to differentiate from physical abuse. Emotional abuse is shown by a zigzag line with the arrow not filled in.

Because relationship patterns can be quite complex, it is often useful to represent them on a separate genogram, which will be easier with genogram software. It will also be possible with the genogram software to indicate the timing of changes in relationship patterns, which may be very important in tracking family process. It is especially relevant to indicate the start and end dates on any cutoffs in the family, as cutoff is likely to ripple out into other patterns of illness or dysfunction.

Relationship Questions

There are many relationship questions you may want to ask to begin to get an understanding of the family, such as the following:

- Are there any family members who do not speak to each other or who have ever had a period of not speaking? Are there any who were/are in serious conflict?
- Are there any family members who are extremely close?
- Who helps out when help is needed?
- In whom do family members confide?
- All couples have some sort of marital difficulties. What sorts of problems and conflicts have you encountered? What about your parents' and siblings' marriages?
- How do you each get along with each child? Have any family members had particular problems dealing with their children?
- What are the power dynamics in family relationships? Are there certain family members who are intimidated by others? Are there certain family members who have more power to define what will happen in relationships? This refers not just to family members who have charisma or emotional power in the family, but also specifically to family members who have more power because of their status in the family and/or in society because of gender, race, skin color, socioeconomic status, age, and sexual orientation.

The clinician should get as many perspectives on family relationships as possible. For example, the husband may be asked, "How close do you think your mother and your older brother were?" The wife might then be asked for her impression of that relationship. The goal is to uncover differences, as well as agreements, about family relationships and to use the different perceptions of the family to enrich the genogram picture for both the clinician and the family.

From the relationships between family members, the clinician also begins to get a sense of the complementarity of roles in the family. Questions that elucidate the role structure include:

- Has any family member been focused on as the caretaker? The problematic one? The "sick" one? The "bad" one? The "mad" one? The "selfish" one? The strong one? The weak one? The dominant one? The submissive one? The successful one? The failure?

- Who is seen as warm? As cold? As caring? As distant?

Labels or nicknames used by family members are particularly instructive. Often, each family member has a family-wide label that describes and even circumscribes his or her position in the family—for example, the tyrant, the supermother, the star, the rebel, or the baby. Labels are good clues to the emotional patterns in the system.

Sometimes it is useful to ask how members of the present family would be characterized by other family members—"How do you think your older brother would describe your relationship with your wife?" or "How would your father have described you when you were 13, the age of your son now?" Again, gathering as many perspectives as possible enriches the family's view of itself and introduces channels for new information.

Relationship patterns of closeness, distance, conflict, and so on may also repeat themselves over the generations. Genograms often reveal complex relational patterns that would be missed if not mapped across a few generations. Recognizing such patterns can, it is hoped, help families avoid continuing the repetition in future generations. One example of such a repetition would be a family in which mother and son in each generation have a special alliance whereas father and son have a negative, conflictual relationship. Realizing the predictability of such patterns and the multigenerational programming involved, a son might choose consciously to change his relationship with his parents in order to change this pattern.

The family of the playwright Eugene O'Neill shows a multigenerational pattern of estrangement between father and children (Figure 2.14). Eugene's paternal grandfather deserted his family, returned to Ireland, and probably committed suicide. Both Eugene and his older brother Jamie felt estranged from their father, James, although they were both totally dependent on him emotionally and financially, and all of them blamed each other for the mother's drug addiction. In the next generation, Eugene, the playwright, refused to see or even mention the name of his daughter, Oona, after her marriage to Charlie Chaplin. He did the same with his son Shane after Shane's son died of neglect. O'Neill never even saw his oldest son, Eugene, Jr., until he was 12, and they were estranged at the time of Eugene Jr.'s suicide at age 40.

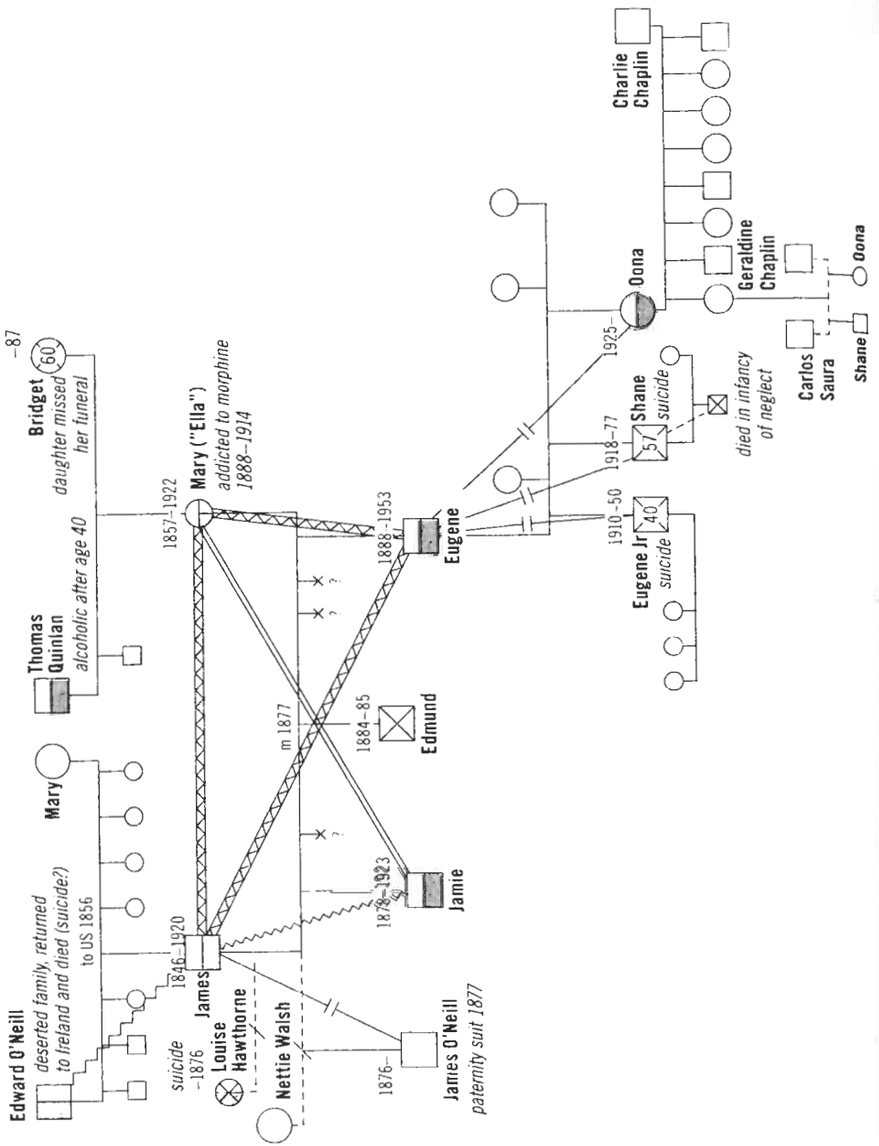


Figure 2.14 O'Neill Family Repetitive Patterns

Adding Contextual Factors to Genograms

As the basic genogram is being drawn, it is important to make sure that the context of the family is indicated: their cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and community values and connections, including work and friend relationships. Although the complexity of these contextual factors is impossible to convey on a single graphic, some basic information about this context is essential and computers will soon make tracking these dimensions a bit easier by enabling us to record information and show it a little at a time. Meanwhile, we always indicate important friendships, work connections, religious affiliation, and cultural heritage, along with as much as possible about the other context of the family.

By asking in an open-ended way what other contextual forces may influence the person, it is possible to get a much broader range of responses, from "belief in social justice" to "shopping" or "music" to "social status." It is also important to ask whether any nonbiological or nonlegal members of the family belong on the genogram, as well as what other key influences should be included. We draw these factors as rectangles, as one does for institutional involvements such as AA, healthcare institutions, or religious communities. Lines can be drawn between family members and the influences that have been included. As can be seen for the Rodriguez family (Color Figure 8), such a contexual genogram can indicate both points of connection and points of tension for a family. In their case, hard work and holidays are strong points of similarity, whereas sports and education created tension between the two older brothers. Jose's wife's Judaism is a "hot" issue for his mother, which repeats a conflict she and her husband had between the Catholic church and Espiritismo.

Such connections can help families become aware of shared values and also point out connections that cause conflict, which may be important for clinical intervention. Contextual influences may include:

- *institutional affiliations*: religious, business, political, or community service institutions; fraternities; professional, military, self-help, athletic, choir, TV, Internet, and hobby groups
- *physical/psychological/spiritual activities*: working out, meditation, yoga

- *support systems* (those that support the family and those that are supported by the family): neighbors, housekeepers, accountants, lawyers, doctors/chiropractors or other caretakers, hairdressers, God, children, pets
- *business and governmental institutions*: legal system, political system, welfare system, social service, credit card companies, insurance companies
- *values or interests*: education, food, sports, music, art, outdoors, stock market

Cultural Genograms: Incorporating Ethnicity, Race, Religion, Spirituality, and Migration

Genograms should always depict information on clients' problems within a contextual framework that takes into account their cultural background (see bibliography on Cultural Genograms). Thus, all genograms should, in this sense, be cultural genograms. Clients in the U.S. are often disconnected from their cultural history; thus, genogram tracking that places them in class, gender, ethnic, racial, and religious context is part of helping them understand who they are, just as questioning around sibling patterns, untimely loss, and multigenerational triangles helps people see themselves in a family context.

Genograms help us contextualize our kinship network in terms of culture, class, race, gender, religion, family process, and migration history. When we ask people to identify themselves ethnically, we are asking them to highlight themes of cultural continuity and cultural identity to make them more apparent. The genogram is a practical, visual tool for assessment of family patterns and context as well as a therapeutic intervention in itself. Genograms allow clinicians to quickly conceptualize the individual's context within the growing diversity of family forms and patterns in our society. By its nature the process of doing a genogram involves the telling of stories and emphasizes respect for the client's perspective, while encouraging multiple views of different family members. By scanning the family system culturally and historically and assessing previous life cycle transitions, the clinician can place present issues in the context of the family's evolutionary patterns of geography, migration, and family process.

Color Figure 10 shows the cultural genogram of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera, who are typical of many people in the Americas in their complex mixture of cultural heritages. (See Color Figure 12 for a similar map of the cultural heritage of the British Royal family.) Kahlo appears to have had a very strong idea of the importance of this heritage, doing her own artistic version of a genogram, including family members who had died or been cut off, as can be seen in Color Figure 9. On her version you can see the cultural mix of her grandparents, as well as the son who died in infancy, and perhaps the half sisters who were extruded from the family and sent to a convent before the mother, Matilda, would agree to marry the father.

Spirituality, Religion, and Fraternal Organizations

Although religion and spiritual resources have, throughout world history, been a primary resource for families in responding to all distress, therapists have often tended to ignore this dimension in their clinical assessment. But religious practices and beliefs (and changes in those beliefs) are important markers of family process. We know that religious beliefs have a strong impact on clients' responses to illness and other stress, as well as on recovery from addiction. But spiritual beliefs also join and alienate family members. George Washington (see Figure 5.3), who kept all diaries and letters from the early age of 14 (amounting in the end to more than 20 volumes of papers), never once mentioned "Christ," though he was a nominal Christian. However, like most of the founding fathers, he was deeply invested in the fraternity of Freemasons, which was a major building block of the Revolution and of his views of government (Johnson, 2005, pp. 10–11). Such secret societies, with their religious, political, and social underpinnings, may have a strong influence on business, friendships, and family relationships. It is undoubtedly of some significance that in the 2004 presidential election, both candidates were members of another elite secret fraternity with religious undertones—the Skull and Bones society at Yale University, where members promise to keep their fraternal (and religiously connected) secrets until death. John Kerry was descended from one of the founders of the society; George Bush was one of at least twelve members of his immediate family who went to Yale, almost all of whom were also in Skull and Bones. This list included all four males of his father's generation, as well as the only daughter's husband, his paternal grandfather and great-great grandfather, and one of his two daughters. For several

generations, close friends of the Bush family included members of Skull and Bones, many of whom were also connected in political, financial, war industry, and national intelligence (CIA) circles. As Color Figure 11 shows, membership in Skull and Bones had a profound influence on the family and provided a network of family relationships, such as a godfather for George W. H. and "uncles" for George W., as well as business and political relationships. It would be impossible to have a good clinical assessment of such a family system without understanding the power and privilege that comes with membership in such a secret society.

Undoubtedly such fraternal relationships, like less secret religious communities, have a profound if unseen influence on families. Thus, all fraternal organizations to which family members belong should be noted on a genogram. They are resources as well as influences on beliefs and behavior. Other religious issues to track on a genogram include conversions, disaffection or expulsion from a religious community, and family conflicts that center on religious differences. Bill Clinton, whose parents seem to have had little interest in religion, was first baptized at the age of 9 with one of his best friends and has had a very strong religious practice ever since. In his autobiography he discussed having been in the Masonic youth organization DeMolay, but he decided against becoming a Mason, "following the long line of distinguished Americans going back to George Washington and Benjamin Franklin . . . probably because in my twenties I was in an anti-joining phase. . . . Besides, I didn't need to be in a secret fraternity to have secrets. I had real secrets of my own, rooted in Daddy's alcoholism and abuse" (Clinton, 2005, p. 45). Both Clinton and Bush are born-again Christians, for different reasons and from different periods of their lives.

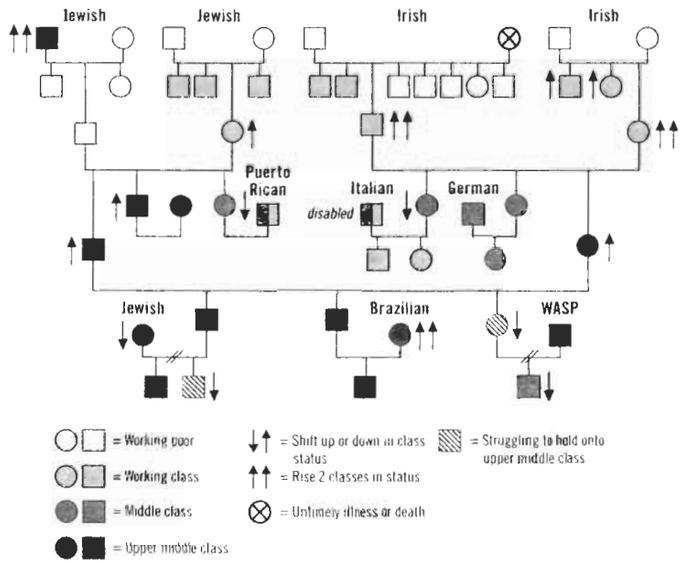
A strikingly different example of someone who felt very alienated and whose conversion probably had multiple meanings was Marilyn Monroe. She converted to Judaism when she married Arthur Miller, though neither he nor his family apparently cared about this issue, and she maintained her conversion until her death (Zimroth, 2002). In Monroe's case, in spite of her divorce from Miller, her conversion "took" and she maintained her Jewish identity until her death, perhaps because, as Zimroth (2002) suggested, it gave her a new sense of "outsider" identity and "historical destiny" through its connection to family and culture, as well as to guiding life principles. The particular function of a person's connection to a religious or spiritual community as well as the meaning of one's distancing from a community of origin, as we will see in Chapter 8 with Erik Erikson's disidentification with his partly Jewish roots, are always worth exploration.

Socioeconomic Status Genograms

It is important to include on any clinical genogram indicators of the education, occupation, and financial status of family members, because this information conveys a tremendous amount about the stresses and resources that play a role in any crisis. With a little graphic creativity, we can create genograms to illustrate the family's socioeconomic status and how it has evolved over time.

Figure 2.15 illustrates a family's changes in class over four generations. Although both sides of the family were generally upwardly mobile, it is interesting that in the second generation, the only children not to move up from working poor to working class were the youngest children of the two branches of the family that experienced the untimely death of a parent. In the next generation, all six children moved up to at least the

Figure 2.15 Socioeconomic Class Genogram



middle class, but the two daughters who married working class men had their middle class status threatened. Both women were teachers, and both of their husbands were blue collar workers. In the fourth generation, the children of two members of the third generation who had achieved upper middle class status had their status threatened: The son who married a working class woman was able to bring her up to his status, but the two daughters who married upper middle class men moved down in status as a result of divorce, and their children were not able to maintain their upper middle class status. This pattern repeated itself for the oldest daughter on the maternal side in the third generation; her children reverted to working class status after her Italian husband's early disability. Generally speaking, women move down in class in a divorce, whereas men do not. This family is no exception. Thus finances and untimely loss or separation can have long-range impact on family members. Such patterns are extremely important to show on genograms.

Religious/Spiritual Genograms

Religion, or at least religious practice, is more likely to change in each generation of a family, at least in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the U.S. Thus, religious genograms may be difficult to draw, because each family member may have a long spiritual trajectory throughout the life cycle. Furthermore, the point at which a conversion occurs may coincide with other life cycle events in ways that are important to assess. Hodge (2005a, 2005b) discussed a number of tools for spiritual assessment in clinical practice—from the spiritual lifemap (which tracks the spiritual life cycle of an individual along a timeline), to the spiritual genogram (which illustrates the patterns in a family across the generations), to spiritual ecomaps and ecograms (which depict clients' current and historical spiritual relationships)—to whatever degree is feasible on a single map.

The following questions gleaned from our own experience and the literature on spiritual genograms (see Religion/Spirituality section of the bibliography) may be helpful to clinicians in opening the questioning about spirituality and religion with a client. Mapping the responses graphically will take all the creativity a therapist or client can muster!

Spirituality Questions

- What meaning does religion or spirituality have for you in your everyday life? In your family's life? In times of danger or crisis?
- What religious or spiritual rituals or beliefs did you grow up with? Have you changed them? What or who influenced the development of your sense of spirituality?
- Are your religious/spiritual beliefs a source of connection or conflict between you and other family members?
- Who understands or shares your religious/spiritual framework?
- Do you participate regularly in religious services or other religious practices?
- What are your sources of hope?
- What are your beliefs about God?
- How do you deal with transgressions that violate your conscience? Forgiveness?
- Have you had premonitions concerning life events?
- What does your religion say about gender roles? Ethnicity? Sexual orientation? How have these beliefs affected you and your extended family?
- What role do music, prayer, meditation, reading, group participation, or good works have in your spiritual practice?
- Have any of your family members felt disillusioned about religion or had serious conflict with each other about religion?
- Have you or any of your family changed religion? If so, how did the family respond?
- Have you had spiritual experiences with friends or relatives who have died? Have you had encounters with spirits, ghosts, angels, or demons? Did you ever feel the intervention of a spirit on your behalf?

Community Genograms

The following are some questions to ask family members in order to gain understanding of their connectedness to their community.

Community Connection Questions

- What community institutions have members of your family belonged to?

- Where did they/do you go to socialize?
- What kinds of connections have you/they had with school? Work? Civic groups? Religious groups, fraternities or sororities?
- Were there ever groups you wanted to be part of but from which you were or felt excluded?
- Are there significant groups in which you and others in your family are not in the same position? Are there groups in which you and your family are not in the same position as most of your community, such as if you are a Democrat in a Republican family, the darkest skinned member of the family, the only family member who has gone to college, or the only Jewish family in a strongly Anglo community?

Because of the multiple dimensions of family members' relationships with their community, it is difficult to imagine a genogram that could visually depict these patterns clearly, but including community context in assessment and intervention with clients is extremely important (Rigazio-DiGilio et al., 2005). At best we can probably explore a few dimensions at a time. It is, nevertheless, worth trying to display graphically a family's connections, resources, and problems in a community context. This is important because, as Rigazio-DiGilio and her colleagues (2005) pointed out, without some mapping of the community context, it is hard to help clients to understand that this context influences their problems and is therefore an important resource in seeking solutions.

Although much has been said about expanding genograms to include issues from the larger social context (the sexual genogram, the cultural genogram, the religious or spiritual genogram, the community genogram, the ecomap, etc.), realistically, such mapping is extremely difficult to accomplish. This is because of the number of different people on even a simple genogram (at least 10) and the number of changing dimensions for each person over the course of a life, which may last 90 years! As noted earlier, any genogram always reflects a trade-off between clarity and complexity. Thus, mapping the sexual history of multiple family members on a genogram would very quickly become overwhelming, and there is probably no simple number of graphic descriptors that would make a clear graphic possible.

The same is true for culture; beyond a certain level of complexity, you cannot show even one cultural dimension—say, ethnicity—not to mention multiple dimensions such as class and religion on the genogram of families who have grown up in multiple countries, speak multiple languages, and have migrated into multiple cultural contexts. Even the ethnicity of an individual becomes prohibitively complex, not to mention that of the whole family. Tiger Woods, for example, is a quarter African-American, a quarter Chinese, a quarter Thai, an eighth Dutch, and an eighth American Indian. This would be very difficult to diagram. Now that he has married a Swedish woman, their children are an even more complex ethnic combination.

There quickly comes a point at which the complexity cannot be mapped in any graphic form. Thus, we must decide to highlight certain aspects of individual and family history while leaving others in the shadows in any particular graphic. The difficulty of drawing comprehensive graphics is not, however, a reason to ignore these important issues in genogram mapping.

Most of the writings about these contextual expansions of the genogram refer to a clinical process where the basic genogram map is used as the basis for the contextual inquiry about these various dimensions of life rather than as a graphic depiction. Computers will help us greatly with this, because they can capture many complexities of changes over time, which can then be shown for a moment or with a genogram of the family's educational history or cultural history, one or two dimensions at a time.

Issues Difficult to Capture on Genograms

Certain genogram patterns, although extremely important in the systems theory underlying genogram mapping, will remain very difficult to capture. These include:

- *Family members involved in family business.* It is extremely difficult to show the organizational relationships in relation to the family structural relationships of families where numerous family members serve on boards, as CFOs or managers, or as full- or part-time workers within a family business.

- *Family members' relationship to the healthcare system.* Mapping such relationships is difficult when different family members are involved at different moments in time with a variety of professionals and have differing relationships with these care providers.
- *Cultural genogram issues.* The variety of issues—such as reasons for migrating, holidays and special events, values about power, and myths and rules (as recommended by Congress, 1994)—makes drawing cultural genograms cumbersome.
- *Family secrets.* It could be easy to show who knows the secret and who does not, but usually when there is one secret, there are others, and showing how particular secrets are kept or shared through a family taxes any mapping process (although computers will be able to capture them and help us see how secrecy operates in families).
- *Particular family relationships.* The nuances of family relationships include complimentarity, unequal power, triangles, patterns of avoidance, intrusion, overfunctioning/underfunctioning, overresponsibility/underresponsibility, scapegoating, dependence/independence, and enmeshment/individualism/isolation.
- *Patterns of friendship.* Even patterns of friendship can quickly become difficult to manage on a genogram. It is easy enough to ask the members of a household to add their key friends, but once we ask about their parents' patterns of friendship it becomes more complex. What if the husband's mother always had a "best" friend but within a year or two had a dramatic cutoff that embroiled other friends and family? What if the parents have many "couple" friends but only a few with whom they have real intimacy? And what happens to this network if the couple gets divorced? The graphic will rapidly become very crowded and hard to follow!
- *Relationships with work colleagues.* The same problems emerge in mapping relationships with work colleagues. Over a whole lifetime these networks may tell a complex story, and if you add the stories of sibling and parents, the picture will quickly become very jammed. Yet these relationships may be key stressors or resources at critical moments in the family history.
- *Spiritual genograms.* A number of authors have written informative papers about working with couples and families around their spiritual history (see the Religion/Spirituality section of the bibliography). Some have even drawn elaborate graphics of doves, bibles, and other religious symbols to illustrate religious visions, intensity of religious experience, and involvement in religious organizations. Practically speaking, however, even with a graphic artist and a very fancy computer to generate the graphic, the landscape of the genogram will quickly become overloaded in trying to track even one individual's spiritual history, never mind that of the whole family. Nevertheless, some notation on any genogram about key religious or spiritual affiliations, experiences and changes is essential, and such assessment of clients' spiritual and religious beliefs and history is necessary for effective clinical assessment. Furthermore, Hodge (2001) offered interesting genogram interview questions on whether clients have ever experienced angels, saints, demons, evil spirits, or the dead and, if so, what kinds of encounters they have had. Such experiences may be crucial to understanding a person's distress or sources of hope, and we need to accept the challenge to find ways to map these relationships on a genogram.
- *Community genograms.* Because connections to community groups, governmental structures, and so on are so complicated, they remain extremely difficult to map, though, as Rigazio-DiGilio and her colleagues (2005) pointed out, they are a very important aspect of genogram inquiry. If you do not take the larger context into account in assessment and in intervention, you marginalize it as a factor in human problems and thus mystify clients about the nature of much of their distress.
- *Tracking medical and psychological stressors.* This can also be very difficult to map concisely because of the potential complexity of each individual family member's medical or psychological history. Nevertheless, it is the most practically useful tool available for assessing patients in any healthcare setting. It is always necessary to know in outline the health history of all family members connected to the IP because of the resource role they will play in healthcare as well as the ripple effect of stress of an illness. Family members may be resources as caretakers; previous generations may provide

role models for handling the stress of illness or may exaggerate a patient's fears of reliving previous negative illness scenarios.

- *Ecomaps.* In one of the classic attempts to contextualize genograms within an ecomap, Hartman (1995) offered 14 larger context institutions (such as social welfare, healthcare, extended family, and recreation) and five different types of connection lines (strong, tenuous, stressful, flow of energy toward family member, and flow of energy toward institution, organization, or group). Even with a small family, as mentioned earlier, the picture quickly becomes very crowded. Adding the institutions from the social context can become very challenging to depict graphically.

Despite the complexities that make it impossible to map all aspects of a family's context on a single graphic, we are at the start of a very exciting new era when, with the help of computers, we will soon be able to make amazing three-dimensional maps that will enable us to track complex patterns in ways we can barely imagine. We will be able to zoom in and track details in great depth on a particular dimension and then compare patterns of thousands of genograms at a time, just as we are now becoming able to study DNA patterns and compare people all around the planet. And we will be able to examine the impact of the broad social network of friends, family, and community over long periods of time. What is very exciting is that for the first time we will be able to examine complexities that go far beyond the individual's ability to hold onto the particulars of family patterns. That is, we'll be able to check out our hunches and intuitions about family patterns over a huge group of families and see whether our ideas are borne out, or find out about new links we have been missing in the relationships between human connections and health, resilience, and creativity.

3

The Genogram Interview

GENOGRAM INTERVIEWS MAY BE DONE in just a few minutes or over many hours, months, or years, depending on the purpose. This chapter offers a framework for thinking about the layers of information on a genogram in a comprehensive way. Readers will want to modify the collection of genogram information to suit the context in which they are working. Expanding Wright and Leahey's (1999, p. 261) recommendation, we believe that if all healthcare interviewers would embrace the simple postulate that "illness is a family affair," we could change the face of health- and mental health care. Indeed, the fragmentation of our society and the disconnection from our families and communities are responsible for many of the ills we witness. Thus, mapping our connections could be the first step toward healing.

We urge that genogram interviewing be incorporated into social service, education, and counseling services as well. Wright and Leahey (1999, p. 265) asserted that the basic genogram information can be gleaned in as little as 2 minutes! This information would include basic demographic information about age, occupation/school grade, ethnic and religious background, migration dates, current health status of family members who are in the household or closely connected to the IP, and key clinical connections and family resources.

This chapter provides a detailed framework for genogram questioning. This is not an outline for how to conduct an interview, which must depend on the purposes, circumstances, and the responses one gets as the interview proceeds. Rather, it provides a framework for thinking about the structure of the questions to consider. A further guide to genogram questions is provided at the end of each chapter in *You Can Go Home Again: Understanding Family Relationships* (McGoldrick, 1995),